DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
BALTIMORE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 1715
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21203-1715

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

POTOMAC RIVER FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT MAINTENANCE DREDGING

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, maintains the Federal navigation projects in the Potomac River. Maintenance dredging is proposed at two channel segments (Hunting Creek Bar and Mattawoman Bar) of the *Potomac River below Washington Project* and at the Alexandria waterfront channel in the vicinity of the ship terminals of the *Potomac River at Alexandria Project*. The *Potomac River below Washington Project* authorized in 1899 provides for a channel of 24 feet deep and 200 feet wide from the Chesapeake Bay to Giesboro Point near Washington, D.C. The *Potomac River at Alexandria Project* authorized in 1910 provides for a channel 24 feet deep from the existing 24 foot contour in the Potomac River to within 20 feet of the pier head line. The existing channels have shoaled to depths that hinder navigational access to Washington, D. C. and Alexandria, Virginia. The channels will be dredged to a depth of 24 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) plus 0.5 feet of allowable overdepth. The volume of material to be dredged has been reduced from 970,000 cubic yards (cy) to 564,000 cy: 104,000 cy from the Alexandria waterfront channel, 96,000 cy from the Hunting Creek Bar, and 364,000 cy from Mattowoman Bar. A total of 7 miles of channel will be dredged. The dredged material will be removed by mechanical dredge and placed in open water by bottom-release scow in a naturally occurring 35-50 foot deep hole in the Potomac River near Gunston Cove off the shoreline of Fort Belvoir. This placement site will be used only once and the material will be mounded within the placement site to enhance fisheries habitat.

The current action was evaluated in an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Potential impacts were assessed with regard to the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem, endangered and threatened species, hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste materials, aesthetics and recreation, cultural resources, and the general needs and welfare of the public. This assessment determined that there would be no significant adverse impacts to the natural or human environment as a result of the proposed action. The proposed work has been coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and state resource agencies. The NMFS has concurred that the project will not likely cause impacts to endangered species. Monitoring of the placement site for sediment spread, fish utilization, benthic recolonization, and water quality will be conducted.

In accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, a Section 404(b)(1) analysis was conducted for the proposed action. The analysis determined that the project would result in no significant impacts to the aquatic environment. Maryland Department of the Environment has issued a water quality certification for the proposed action.

Upon reviewing the EA, I find that potential adverse environmental impacts associated with implementation of the proposed project will not be significant. Any adverse impacts will occur over a relatively small area and will be primarily short-term in nature. To lessen the possibility of adverse impacts, dredging will be restricted to the period of 1 October through 15 February. Based upon this finding, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Bruce A. Berwick, P.E.
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

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